

October 26, 2007

The Honorable Robert Gates Secretary of Defense 1000 Defense Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to urge the Administration to submit a FY 2009 budget request of at least \$75 million for the Range and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI) within the Operations and Maintenance, Defense-wide account, and to increase that amount as rapidly as possible over the 2010-2015 Future Year Defense Program to a stable funding level of at least \$100 million annually.

According to DOD and RAND Corporation assessments, REPI has been effective in bringing government and private partners together with DOD to establish buffer zones to protect training and testing areas at military installations throughout the country. The partnerships formed under this program have served to enhance military readiness, protect open space and key natural habitat, and encourage economic growth.

However, the RAND report, entitled "The Thin Green Line," also concluded that the REPI program is seriously underfunded, that opportunities for effective action to protect bases are being lost, and that the cost of effective action will only increase over time as developmental pressures intensify.

These conclusions show that the Pentagon's requests for REPI funding for FY 2007 and FY 2008—\$20 million and \$30 million, respectively—have simply not been adequate. While we anticipate that Congress will again increase the REPI account above the requested level during the FY 2008 appropriations process, we believe that the Department of Defense must show a serious commitment to funding REPI's efforts in FY 2009 and beyond.

In our view, REPI needs to be funded at a level of at least \$75 million in FY 2009 if it is to continue to be successful in addressing encroachment, preserving the readiness of our Armed Forces, and ensuring the long range sustainability of our installations, ranges, and airspace. We respectfully encourage you and the President to ask for this amount in the FY 2009 budget request.

Sincerely,

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